

U.S. Negro Revolution

Steamrolling Uphill

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Negro consciousness remained in suspended animation in America for three hundred years. In the last 25 years that consciousness has fully emerged, and we have been the witnesses to the most critical of those years. The Negro revolution in America is unique, fantastic, and inevitable. There is not now, and has not been before, any nation that could claim itself to be the successful vanguard of popular rule of, by, and for all the people, while it found itself saddled with a huge minority population which it forced into a ghetto of oblivion and degradation—in short, into the empty spaces in the stuff of its idealism—because the people of the nation felt themselves to be superior to the people of the minority.

The implication, of course, was that the American Negro was not, per se, a Negro American. And this, in all probability and understandably, was the sincere belief of Southern whites even after the passage of the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments. Mere scraps of paper. They meant nothing. There had not been an amendment for 60 years; attempting to comprehend all three at once—especially those three—was like attempting to comprehend the number one billion. Our difficulties now, 100 years later, stem from what appears to be exactly the same belief of too many people. The theory of the non-citizenship of the Negro was perpetuated into the 20th century, while the basic prejudicial motives behind it remained unchanged. But there were Negroes who knew they were citizens and whites who supported them, and they exercised their rights to prove it. Many of them are dead now. The soil has not stopped settling in their graves. As long as so many white people remain ignorant of the biological facts to life, nursing their egomania, the soil will remain tortured. The Negro movement is rolling uphill. It won't stop now no matter how many cruel backlashes are exacted, such as the murder of Mrs. Viola Liuzzo a few hours after the Selma to Montgomery march ended. We're part of the revolution; it's up to us to make it work, not wait for it to end. It won't end soon.